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ABSTRACT

The Follett spelling series "Spelling and Writing Patterns" is reviewed in terms of content and method. While descriptive writing plays a considerable role in the series, it is discussed only briefly in this paper. It is concluded that, other than in the first book, spelling instruction does not provide a sufficient basis for learning the sound-to-spelling correspondences of English. (Author/RB)

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REVIEW OF THE FOLLETT SPELLING SERIES, *SPELLING AND WRITING PATTERNS*

Bruce Cronnell

ABSTRACT

The Follett spelling series, *Spelling and writing patterns*, is reviewed in terms of content and to a lesser degree, method. While descriptive writing plays a considerable role in the series, it is not discussed in detail in this paper. Other than in the first book (and questionably even there), spelling instruction does not provide a sufficient basis for learning the sound-to-spelling correspondences of English.

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REVIEW OF THE FOLLETT SPELLING SERIES, *SPELLING AND WRITING PATTERNS*

In order to better understand spelling as it is presently taught in the schools, several commercial spelling series have been obtained for review (see Cronnell, 1970a, b, c, d, e). These reviews are more concerned with content than with method, because of this writer's competence and interest in the former.

The series reviewed in this paper is:

> Botel, M., Holsclaw, C., Cammarota, G., & Brothers, A. *Writing and spelling patterns*. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1968.
>
> (Books B-F in the hard-bound edition are titled *Patterns in spelling and writing*.)

This series has six books, A-F, covering grades 1-6. Only the first four books, A-D, will be reviewed here, since they best approximate the concerns of the SWRL K-3 Communication Skills Program.

Spelling patterns

Spelling is taught by use of patterns, rather than rules or generalizations. Four types of spelling patterns are used "to help pupils explore structure in words and to help build sound-letter relationships...:

1. rhyming: cat, hat, sat, etc.;
2. beginning letter and sound similarities: cab, cat, can, etc.;
3. beginning and ending letter and sound similarities: cat, cot, cut;
4. short and long vowel contrasts: mad-made, hop-hope, etc."

(A: Tinsert D[1]).

The use of patterns emphasizes a whole-word approach: "Pupils always work with a total word, not individual letter names" (A: T9) and teachers are warned to avoid "overanalysis of sounds and letters as well as abstract language labels [e.g., "vowel"] (A: T37).[2] The

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[1]The letter before the colon is the book; following the colon is the page number; "T" indicates the teacher's edition.

[2]Labels are allowed in Book C, where they are required for grammar study.

emphasis on whole words is valuable, in that words are the functional language elements which children must spell. However, the lack of emphasis on individual sound-letter relationships may make transfer (which is not tested) difficult.

In teaching these spelling patterns, there is no linguistic information indicated for the teacher. Dialect information is not given either.

Techniques

Two techniques for learning to spell are employed in the Follett series: mastery and discovery. The "mastery technique" is used to learn the spelling of all program words and consists of three steps, each to be accompanied by saying the whole word: (1) study and trace, (2) copy and compare, and (3) cover, write and compare. In this method, there is no concern with directly connecting sound and spelling; instead a whole-word memorization process is encouraged.

The "discovery technique" is "an inductive language approach," which "encourages pupils to think as they explore language and make discoveries about word patterns" (A: Tinsert B). Essentially this technique consists of giving sample words with certain letters noted (e.g., how, clown) and instructing the pupil to write additional words with the pattern (e.g., down, now). As far as this goes, it is the only real emphasis on spelling patterns (but with little concern for the sound to be spelled).

A perhaps more important techinque, especially after Book A, is testing, as can be seen from the following suggested weekly schedules:

Book B:	Wednesday:	self-test
	Friday:	final test (B: Tinsert C)
Book C:	Monday:	pretest
	Thursday:	self-test and sentence patterning
	Friday:	final test (C: Tinsert D)
Book D:	Monday:	pretest
	Thursday:	self-test
	Friday:	final test (D: Tinsert D)

As can be noted here and will be noted in the following section, little time is allotted for spelling instruction per se.

Writing patterns

As the title of the series suggests, the Follett series is concerned with writing as well as spelling. In fact, the concern with writing

(i.e., descriptive writing and grammar) often seems to be nearly as important as spelling. From 1/5 to 2/5 of the time (one to two days) is devoted to writing activities. These activities include the following:

a. unmixing jumbled sentences (e.g., mule road a is the in → A mule is in the road, B: 42);

b. adding words to sentences (e.g., The steps are strong → The green steps are strong → The green steps are strong and high, C: 70);

c. filling words in patterns (e.g., He----me home, A: 79);

d. paragraph and letter writing (Book C and D contain special sections for such "Written expression").

Since the concern of this review is not with grammar and writing, these aspects of the Follett series will not be evaluated. However, it should be noted that as a result of these concerns with writing and testing (as noted above), spelling instruction per se plays a relatively insignificant role in the series.

Number of words

These figures are for "basic program words," which are tested, and do not include words used in the various exercises. For Books B-D, a number for "total words" is indicated in parentheses; this includes words in the review sections, many of which are introduced in earlier books (cf, inside front and back covers of all books).

Book A 190 words

Book B 240 words (312 total words)

Book C 600 words (708 total words)

Book D 600 words (708 total words)

Content of Book A

Because of the use of spelling patterns (as discussed above), it is sometimes difficult to know just what sound-to-spelling correspondences are taught. Those involving one letter are only taught in patterns, although they are listed below as individual rules. Those with two or more letters are more clearly noted in the series. The following correspondences found in Book A are not ordered.

[b] → b	[h] → h	[n] → n	[t] → t
[d] → d	[j] → j	[p] → p	[v] → v
[f] → f	[l] → l	[r] → r	[w] → w
[g] → g	[m] → m	[s] → s	[y] → y

[k] → c (/__{a, o, u})

[k] → k (/__{i, e})

[k] → k (/[V̄]__#; [V̄] = V...e)
[k] → ck (/[V̆]__#)

These two correspondences are contrasted in patterns, e.g., back-bake; lick-like, A: 62.

[š] → sh
[č] → ch
[hw] → wh (no dialect differences noted)
{[θ], [ð]} → th
[ŋ] → ng
[ŋ] → n/__k

[l] → ll
[s] → ss

[æ] → a	[ɛ] → e	[ɪ] → i	[a] → o	[ə] → u

[e] → a...e	[ay] → i...e

[i] → ee	[i] → ea	[e] → ay

[u] → oo	[ʊ] → oo

[ar] → ar	[or] → or	[ər] → ir

[aw] → ow	[aw] → ou

[old] → old	[ɔll] → all

?[ay] → igh (Exercises A: 109, but no words on word list)

Suffixes: -s, -ed, -ing

Syllables

Books B-D

While Book A is concerned with spelling patterns and rules (as well as writing), in Books B-D the content is quite different. The summary of contents (detailed below) from Book C is practically the same as for the other two books:

Book C:	pages	content
	3-6	handwriting
	7-30	"Skills Training"
	31	Placement tests
	32-91	"Basic Program"
	92-101	"Written Expression"[3]
	102-105	"Refresher Program"
	106-120	"Power Program"

The "Skills Training Program" is a "get-acquainted section where ideas of earlier books are re-examined" (B: Tinsert C). It is thus a review of spelling patterns and rules, with some new material included. This first seven weeks of each year is nearly the only place for spelling instruction (as opposed to testing or writing instruction) after Book A.

The placement tests after the review ("skills training") are used to divide the class into three groups: (1) those who do poorly take the "Refresher Program,"[4] which contains words from previous years; (2) those who do very well take the "Power Program," which is a set of self-tests on words from the next level; and (3) average students take the "Basic Program." In addition, all students do the written work of the Basic Program. Since the Follett series, Books B-D, is primarily concerned with writing and testing, having three different levels causes no problems for spelling instruction: all learning of spelling is done individually. The teacher must only make provision for testing by groups, and even that is minimal.

The spelling content of these three programs (refresher, basic, power) is organized in an amazingly simple fashion: the total set of words for the year (chosen "on a basis of frequency of use in writing," B: T33) is alphabetized and then divided into lists of words of a certain number to be learned in each lesson. There is thus no organization other than alphabetical order and no concern for sound-to-spelling correspondences. Pupils are simply to learn the spellings of these words, with memorization being the most obvious method. Any concern for spelling-to-sound correspondences in Book A and in the "Skills Training" sections is completely absent from the remainder of Books B-D. The following sections list what little spelling content is introduced in these books, most of which is in the "Skills Training" sections.

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[3]Exercises assigned for each lesson.

[4]Not used in Book B.

Content of Book B

[e] → ai
[o] → oa [o] → ou [o] → o...e
[z] → z
[n] → kn

Suffix: -er

Suffixation: ∉ + ed/ing; C + C ed/ing

Homonyms

Content of Book C

[ər] → ur
[ɛ] → ea
[ǰ] → g
[s] → c

Suffixes: -es, -ly, -est

Suffixation: y → i + es, ∉ + er/est

Possessives

Contractions

Compounds

Content of Book D

Dictionary pronunciation symbols are used, primarily as stimuli for writing words. Some earlier spelling rules are noted explicitly.

[ay] → y [i] → y
[oy] → oi
[kw] → qu
[r] → wr

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